

Every Child Learning Every Day



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READY TO LEARN

Holiday emotions subject of books

By Dr. Stan Steiner

The holiday season brings on a range of emotions. Below are some books to help cover the spectrum.

"Whatever," by William Bee, 2004, Candlewick Press. Nothing seems to impress Billy. His father goes through great lengths to please him, but all Billy can say is "whatever." In the end his father has the final say. A clever lesson for discussing appreciation.

"Santa Claus the World's Number One Toy Expert," by Marla Frazee, 2005, Harcourt. How does Santa keep track of every child? How does he match the right gift with each child most of the time? This humorous insider's look at Santa's world might provide some answers to those big questions.

"Where Did They Hide My Presents? Silly Dilly Christmas Songs," by Alan Katz and illustrated by David Cox, 2005, McElderry Books. This team of author and illustrator have become synonymous with laughter, silliness and plain fun. Katz creates the holiday verse with a suggested familiar musical melody and Cox illustrates the whimsical characters to accent the humor.

"A Doll for Navidades," by Esmeralda Santiago and illustrated by Enrique O. Sánchez, 2005, Scholastic Press. Wishing for a special gift at Christmas is something that many children can relate to, but when your wish goes to a sibling it stirs a mountain of emotions.

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In the season of giving, picking toys can be difficult

Dear Reader:

The gift giving season is well under way, and one of the challenges for parents is answering the question of "what toy is right for my child?"

Today with the overwhelming amount of toys on the market it can be hard to discern what will be a quality purchase that will be entertaining, educational, and worth the money.

Some questions to ask as you consider toys for children under the age of 5:

Is this a safe toy? Toys for young children should not have sharp edges, pose a danger of suffocation, or contain small parts that could be a choking hazard. www.kidshealth.org has some useful information when evaluating toys for safety. Families with older children should be cautious that their toys may have small parts.



Dr. Marilyn Howard

Is the toy developmentally appropriate? Toys should be challenging but not frustrating for a child. A publication called "Which Toy for Which Child," provides detailed information by age level

and is available online at: <http://www.cpssc.gov/cpsscpub/pubs/285.pdf>

Will this toy endure and be played with for more than a few days? This question can be answered in a couple of ways. You might rely on your experiences as a child. You may remember a set of building blocks, a wagon, or other toys that were played with over and over again. Another solution is to check out www.parents-choice.org.

This not-for-profit evaluates a variety of children's products to provide parents with information to participate wisely in their children's learning.

Finally, while toys take center stage during the holiday season, I would encourage you remember to include a few good books, too.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Directions activities gets preschoolers moving

Physical Education (P.E.) Central is a website (www.pecentral.org) where educators and others share lesson plans for activities aimed at different age groups.

Activity: "Directions"

Purpose: To explore walking in different directions and observe changes in tempos.

Materials needed: One carpet square or base for each child, drum or tambourine. Cones to mark off playing area also could be useful.

Description: Scatter bases (carpet squares work fine also) around the playing area.

On the drumbeat the children

begin walking in and around the bases. Have them explore the entire area but they need to avoid the bases.

When the drum stops, they move to the nearest base and freeze on the base. They are welcome to share a base. Make sure they don't fight over it.

Repeat this, using different directions for the students to move in (i.e., sideways, diagonally, backwards) and increasing or decreasing the tempo of the drum beat.

Ask the children to walk to the tempo the teacher is beating.

Variations: Have the children stand on a base as quickly as they can.

Exercise tips for busy families

- * Walk or ride bikes instead of driving for short distances.

- * Park your car at the end of the lot, instead of near the entrance of stores.

- * Take the stairs instead of elevators.

- * Make walks and bike rides a routine event for your family.

- * Share the yard and household chores.



PARENT TIPS

And Idaho's parent survey says

By the Idaho Association for Education of Young Children

Earlier this year, the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children sponsored a statewide child care survey designed to gauge citizen opinion on child care regulatory issues.

Nearly 1,400 Idaho residents responded to the survey. More than 40 percent of respondents said that Idaho's child care regulations to protect and nurture our children are "inadequate." An additional 16.5 percent rated current regulations as "terrible."

The survey was designed to identify what attributes of child care were important to Idaho citizens. More than 90 percent of the survey respondents:

Support criminal history checks, relating concerns about sexual predators working in and having access to Idaho child cares.

Want the number of children in a group defined, and are in favor of varying the ratio of adults to children depending on the age of the children.

Express concern regarding the level of education, training and experience of caregivers.

The open comments section of the survey produced reoccurring themes. Respondents expressed concerns about:

- The variation and lack of regulation across the state. One respondent lamented that "the [current] regulations in our state allow sub-standard, unsafe child cares to operate and put the children of Idaho at risk."
- The long-range negative impacts that poor quality early care inflicts on children. Many spoke from personal experience, citing that "minimal, uniform and age appropriate curriculum and safety requirements would benefit the children of Idaho."
- The long-range negative impacts that poor quality early care inflicts on the state. One respondent said, "Idaho needs to make quality early childhood programs a priority. Money spent in the early years will save millions in reducing future costs for remedial education, social welfare programs and prison expenses."

For information about accredited programs, www.idahoaeYC.org and click on 'Information for Parents'.

NUTRITION

Snacks provide nourishment, energy throughout the day

Young children need energy throughout the day. Snacks are a good way to increase a child's energy needs and provide healthful meals at the same time. Snacks should not replace breakfast, lunch, or dinner, but should be served in addition to these meals to help keep a young child's body from getting too hungry between meals.



There are many good choices for healthy snacks for your young child, such as tuna on a bagel, grated cheese on a toasted English muffin, or milk and whole wheat crackers.

One caution to remember when serving snacks is that young children are at risk of choking on food. Always supervise young children when they are eating snacks or other meals.

Some foods that cause choking include the following: hot dogs, raisins, nuts and seeds, raw carrots, whole grapes, chips, raw

celery, large pieces of fruit with skin, pretzels, or peanut butter eaten from a spoon without another food item such as bread.

Some foods can be offered in another form. Here are some suggestions: Cut hot dogs lengthwise into thin strips, steam carrots or celery until slightly soft, then cut in sticks, cut grapes or cherries in small pieces, peel apples and cut in small pieces.

By following these suggestions adults can help protect a young child from choking and encourage them to nourish his or her body all day with healthy snacks.

SMART STARTS

Help children understand family relationships

When children graduate from school they are expected to understand the cultural and social development of the United States.

Part of that knowledge is understanding their own personal history part of a family, school, and community.

During early life, children learn about families and their roles in their family.

Birth to 1 year

Identify the people and their roles in the baby's life as they interact with baby. For example, "Grandma Ruby

is coming to visit" or "Your brother Jacob is home from school."

1 to 3 years

Pull out a few photos of family and friends your child sees often and identify who is in the picture and identify their relationship to the child together. You can ask older children: "Who is in this picture? Or where is your brother in this photo?"

3 to 5 years

Working with your child, you can draw or color a family picture or you can use spare or old photos to create a family collage. Ask your child to

identify people in your drawing or collage. You can also use holiday gatherings to identify the relationships between the child and familiar and not-so-familiar relations.

Skills need for kindergarten

A child should know his first and last name and identify immediate family members.

Additional resources

"Love You Forever," by Robert N. Munsch and Sheila McGraw; "Daddy and Me," and "Where is Baby's Mommy," by Karen Katz, and "The Family Book," by Todd Parr.

ART

Secret package can help show others that you care

By Jennifer Williams
2002 Idaho Teacher of the Year

There are incredible opportunities this month for families with young children to bake goodies, build a family of snowmen, make holiday ornaments, stockings, and cards, decorate a tree or learn to cross country ski.

Everything will help to promote manual dexterity and fine motor development.

The winter months are also the time when we think of the many ways to show how we can be community helpers. Preschool children are never too young to be involved in activities of giving and caring for others. Why not combine the development of motor skills with acts of kindness by making

care packages for the family, a few neighbors, children in the hospital, senior citizens, policemen or firemen at a local station.

What to do:

Place the following items in a little baggie or paper bag with a slip of paper that reads:

A STICK OF GUM - to remind you to stick with it.

A PENNY - to share happy thoughts.

A CANDLE - to give you light when you feel lost.

A CHOCOLATE KISS - from someone who cares.

LIFESAVERS - because everyone needs help once in a while.

A ROSE - to remind you to take

time to smell the flowers.

SMARTIES - to help you on days when you don't feel so smart.

A SNICKER BAR - to look for the funny side of life.

CONFETTI - in celebration of the good times.

A BAG - for keeping it all together.

A shopping trip to a dollar store will be a visual treat for the preschooler and might be an opportunity to find even more things to include in the 'secret care package.'

Williams has authored a new art textbook. More information is available at: <http://www.teaching-point.net/art2.html>